

DETROIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH POLICY

In compliance with federal law, it is the policy of the Detroit Board of Education to provide a free, appropriate education for all children. This includes, but is not limited to homeless children and youth as defined in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, reauthorized in January 2002. Under federal law, homeless children and youth must have access to appropriate public education, including preschool, and be given full opportunity to meet state and local academic achievement standards. They must be included in state and district wide assessments and accountability systems. The Detroit Public Schools will ensure that homeless children and youth are free from discrimination, segregation and harassment.

DEFINITIONS OF THE TERM "HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH"

The term "homeless children and youth" is defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act as:

- Children who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence.
- Children and youth who are sharing the housing of others, with or without their parents, due to loss of housing (Doubled up).
- Children living in motels or hotels.
- Children living in emergency or transitional shelters.
- Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
- Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
- Unaccompanied youth includes youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.
- Migratory children and youth who are living in a situation described above.

IDENTIFICATION

In collaboration with school personnel and community organizations, the local liaison and DPS Homeless staff will identify homeless children and youth in the district. They will train school personnel on The McKinney-Vento Act, available resources, indicators of homelessness, sensitivity in identifying homeless families and youth and procedures for forwarding information indicating homelessness to the local liaison.

ENROLLMENT

The School District cannot delay or deny enrollment of a homeless student.

Schools must immediately enroll students in homeless situations, even if they do not have required uniforms or documents, such as: school records, birth certificates, immunization records, medical records, proof of residency, or other documents. Unaccompanied youth must also be enrolled immediately in school. Unaccompanied youth may either enroll themselves or be enrolled by non-parent caretaker, older sibling, local liaison or DPS Homeless Staff. Students are able to enroll and attend classes while the school arranges for the transfer of school and immunization records or any other documents required for enrollment.

TRANSPORTATION

Homeless students have the right to receive transportation to and from their school of origin or the school closest to where they are currently living, if the parent/guardian or youth requests such transportation. "School of origin" is defined as the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled. In addition to providing transportation to the school of origin, Detroit Public Schools will provide students in homeless situations with transportation services comparable to those provided to other students. If the student's temporary residence is outside of the Detroit Public School District the new district and DPS will determine how to divide the responsibility and cost of providing transportation, or they will share the responsibility and the cost equally.

TRAINING

The local liaison and DPS Homeless Staff will conduct training and sensitivity/awareness activities for district staff, parents, shelter staff, and community agencies. The training and activities will be designed to increase staff awareness of homelessness, facilitate immediate enrollment, ensure compliance with this policy, and increase sensitivity to homeless children and youth.

COORDINATION

The local liaison and DPS Homeless Staff will coordinate with and seek support from the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, public and private service providers in the community, housing and placement agencies, the pupil transportation department, local liaisons in neighboring districts, and other organizations and agencies. Coordination will include conducting outreach and training to those agencies participating in the local continuum of care, homeless coalition, homeless steering committee, and other relevant groups. Both public and private agencies will be encouraged to support the local liaison and DPS in implementing this policy.

STUDENT RIGHTS

Homeless children and youth have the right to:

- Go to school, no matter where they live or how long they have lived there.
- Continue in the school in which they last attended before they became homeless.
- Attend school and participate in school programs with students who are not homeless, including receiving tutoring or remedial assistance.
- Automatic eligibility for free meals.
- Receive the same special programs and services, if needed, as provided to all students served in these programs such as public pre-school, head Start, State pre-K, special Education, Gifted, and Title I programs.
- Policies and procedures that do not isolate or stigmatize children and youth on the basis of their homelessness
- Unaccompanied Youth can be enrolled in school without the assistance of a parent or guardian.
- Provide access to free and public education to all students until they have reached their high school graduation or equivalent, or in accordance to Michigan State Law. For special education student, Michigan State Law provides the right to access services until they have reached their 26th birthday.

PARENT RIGHTS

- The right to choose which school the child will attend (either the home school or the school nearest their current address, whichever is in the best interest of the child).
- The right to appeal if a school refuses to admit a child or a school refuses to keep a child enrolled. (Enrollment means attending classes and participating fully in school activities).
- The right to a written explanation from the school regarding enrollment disputes.
- The right to seek assistance of liaisons, advocates or attorneys.
- The right to receive tutoring or remedial assistance for their children.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

See Detroit Public Schools Education of Homeless Children and Youth Dispute Resolution Policy.

SERVICES PROVIDED TO HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Detroit Public Schools will assist each homeless child or youth in accessing services offered to other students, including the following:

- School Social Work Services
- Educational services for which the child or youth meets the eligibility criteria, such as services provided under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 or similar state or local programs, educational programs for children with disabilities, and educational programs for students with limited English proficiency.
- Head Start
- Programs in Vocational and Technical education
- Programs for gifted and talented students
- School nutrition programs
- Before school and after school programs
- Tutoring programs
- Referrals for medical and mental health services
- Pre-school programs
- Parent education
- Counseling

References

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. 5511431-11436.

Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 20 U.S.C. 556311-6315.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C 551400 et seq.

Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, 42 U.S.C. 551751 et seq.

June 5, 1992 Policy of the Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Detroit Public Schools Homeless Program Dispute Resolution Process

Disputes may arise where a parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth requests enrollment in a school that the Detroit Public Schools believes is not in the best interest of the student. **Whenever a dispute arises, the student must be admitted immediately to the requested school while the dispute is being resolved.** There may also be disputes over whether a student will receive transportation to the school he/she requested.

In a case where the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth opposes the decision for or against placement and/or transportation by the Detroit Public Schools, the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth have the right to submit an appeal to the district, or personally contact Phyllis S. White, Homeless Liaison at 313-866-9670.

Detroit Public Schools has created a procedure for resolving disputes, i.e. enrollment and transportation regarding homeless children and youth.

Procedure: In a case where a dispute occurs regarding homeless children or youth, the following process must be used: Level I of the appeal is to the district's homeless liaison. If unresolved at this level, the case is appealed to the Director of School Social Work Service (Level II). If the dispute continues to be unresolved, the appeal is forwarded to the Office of the General Superintendent (Level III). The final appeal is to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE). **Every effort must be made to resolve the complaint or dispute at the local level before it is brought to the MDE.**

Level I: DPS Liaison Communication

If a parent or unaccompanied youth wishes to appeal the school district's decision:

1. The parent or unaccompanied youth must file a request for dispute resolution with Detroit Public Schools' Homeless Liaison by submitting a form that initiates the dispute resolution process. The parent or unaccompanied youth may submit the request directly to the homeless liaison or they may submit the request to the school where the dispute is taking place. If the request is submitted to the school, the school administrator shall immediately forward the request to the district's homeless liaison at the Office of School Social Work Service – Longfellow Annex – Room 140, 13141 Rosa Parks Boulevard, 313.866.9670.
2. The homeless liaison must log the receipt of the complaint, including the date and time, with a written description of the situation and the reason for the dispute. A copy of the complaint must be forwarded to the Director of the Office of School Social Work Service, and the Office of the General Superintendent.
3. Within five business days of the receipt of the complaint, the liaison must make a decision on the complaint and inform the parent or unaccompanied youth in writing of the result. It is the responsibility of the district to verify the parent's or unaccompanied youth's receipt of the written notification regarding the homeless liaison's Level I decision.

4. If the parent or unaccompanied youth disagrees with the decision made at Level I and wishes to move the dispute resolution process forward to Level II, the parent or unaccompanied youth shall notify the district's homeless liaison of their intent to proceed to Level II within 10 business days of receipt of notification of the Level I decision.
5. If the parent or unaccompanied youth wishes to appeal the liaison's decision, the district's homeless liaison shall provide the parent or unaccompanied youth with an appeals package containing:
 - A copy of the complaint which was filed at Level I
 - The decision rendered at Level I by the homeless liaison
 - Any additional information from the parent, unaccompanied youth, and/or homeless liaison.

Level II: Director of School Social Work Services

1. If a parent disagrees with the decision rendered by the District Homeless Liaison at Level I, the parent or unaccompanied youth may appeal the decision to the Director of School Social Work Service, using the appeal package provided at Level I. The Director shall provide a decision in writing to the parent, or unaccompanied youth within 5 business days of receiving the appeal package.

Level III: Superintendent Communication

(If the dispute remains unsolved after Level II appeal)

1. If a parent disagrees with the decision rendered by the district's homeless liaison at Level II, the parent or unaccompanied youth may appeal the decision to the general superintendent, or the superintendent's designee, (the designee shall be someone other than the district's homeless liaison) using the appeal package provided at Level II.
2. The general superintendent, or designee, will arrange for a personal conference to be held with the complainant within five business days of the notification of the Level III dispute. Once arranged, the meeting is to take place as expeditiously as possible.
3. Within five business days of the meeting, the superintendent or designee will provide a decision in writing with reasons and supporting evidence. It is the responsibility of the district to verify the parent's or unaccompanied youth's receipt of the written notification regarding the superintendent's Level III decision.
4. A copy of the appeals package, along with the decision made at Level III is to be shared with the district's homeless liaison.
5. If the parent or unaccompanied youth disagrees with the decision made at Level III and wishes to move the dispute resolution process forward to Level IV, he/she shall notify the Superintendent of their intent to proceed to Level IV within ten business days of receipt of notification of the Level IV decision.
6. If the dispute remains unresolved, the process then moves to Level IV.

**Level IV: Michigan Department of Education (MDE) Homeless Coordinator
Communication**

(If the dispute remains unresolved after a Level III appeal)

1. The general superintendent shall forward all written documentation and related paperwork to the:

MDE Homeless Coordinator-Pam Keis-Lowe.
Homeless Education Consultant
Michigan Department of Education
Office of School Improvement
Academic Support Unit
608 W. Allegan St.
Lansing, Michigan 48909
Ph: 517-241-1162
Fax: 517-241-0247

for review, within five business days of notifying the parent or unaccompanied youth of the decision of Level III.

2. The MDE homeless coordinator shall make a final decision within five business days of the receipt of the complaint.
3. The final decision will be forwarded to the local school district's homeless liaison for the distribution to the parent and the local superintendent.
4. The decision made by MDE shall be the final resolution for placement of a homeless child or youth in the district.
5. The office of the school district superintendent shall maintain a record of all disputes related to the placement of homeless children and youths. These records shall be made available to MDE upon request.

**Detroit Public Schools
Dispute Resolution Form
Homeless Children and Youth Program**

Enrollment Decision for Homeless Students

This form is to be completed by the parent or guardian when a dispute arises. The information may be shared verbally with the Homeless Liaison instead of completing this form. The Homeless Liaison, Phyllis S. White, can be reached at 313-866-9670.

Date submitted: _____

Student(s): _____

Person completing form: _____

Relation to student(s): _____

I may be contacted at (phone/email): _____

I wish to appeal the enrollment decision made by: _____

School: _____

You may include a written explanation to support your appeal in this space or provide your explanation verbally.

I have been provided with a written explanation of the school's decision:

_____ **Yes** _____ **No**

Signature of person submitting the dispute: _____

Date: _____

<p>School Use only</p> <p>Send copy of this completed form to Phyllis S. White, Homeless Liaison – Office of School Social Work Service – Longfellow Annex – Room 140, 13141 Rosa Parks Boulevard, Detroit, Michigan 48238</p> <p>Date received by Homeless Liaison _____</p>
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